

# Message to Constituents

## U.S. Congressman Elijah E. Cummings

Representing the 7<sup>th</sup> U.S. Congressional District of Maryland

July 30, 2004  
<http://www.mail.house.gov/cummings>

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### Congressman Cummings, House Transportation Democrats Introduce Rail Security Legislation



Dear Constituent:

It is both a privilege and an honor to represent you in the United States Congress. While serving you, I will continue my outreach efforts to inform you of legislative action. I welcome your advice. Government "by the people" is the cornerstone of my legislative philosophy.

To better serve you closer to home, I invite you to visit or contact one of my district offices, listed on the following pages. In Howard County, my staff and I make regular outreach visits at various community centers. We look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

Elijah E. Cummings

In response to reports that terrorists may be planning attacks at various public places before election day, Congressman Cummings along with his Democratic colleagues on the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee introduced the *Protecting Railroad Operators, Travelers, Employees and Communities with Transportation Security Act of 2004* (H.R. 4896: PROTECTS Act) that will improve rail security.

"Since one in three terrorist attacks worldwide have targeted railroads and other surface transportation systems, securing our nation's railways must be a key priority within our homeland security and anti-terrorism efforts," Congressman Cummings said. "I urge the House Leadership to give this bill immediate consideration."

Congressman Cummings observed that the lack of attention to rail security is apparent in the disparities between federal spending in aviation versus rail security. In fiscal year 2004, the federal budget has allocated \$4.4 billion for airline security, while allocating only \$65 million for rail security.

"This is neglectful because five times as many people ride trains as planes on a daily basis," Congressman Cummings said.

The PROTECTS Act addresses the much neglected vulnerabilities within the nation's 220,000 mile rail network. The legislation would authorize the following:

**\$500 million** for freight and passenger rail security improvements;  
**\$597 million** for Amtrak's fire and life-safety improvements;  
**\$100 million** for rail research development;  
**\$65 million** for system-wide Amtrak security upgrades.

The bill also provides for improved training and equipment for railroad employees and local emergency personnel to better respond to terrorist incidents.

In May 2003, Congressman Cummings released a General Accounting Office report entitled *Rail Safety and Security: Some Actions Already Taken to Enhance Rail Security, but Risk-based Plan is Needed*, which was initiated by both September 11 and the July 2001 Howard Street Tunnel accident in Baltimore. (Cont.)

## ***Rail Security, from Pg. 1***

The May 2003 report found several rail security risks such as:

- Insufficient monitoring of rail carrying hazardous material;
- Lenient access to facilities designated as restricted;
- Inconsistent presence of security guards.

“The PROTECTS Act addresses these risks and calls for a plan that would deter potential terrorist attacks.” Congressman Cummings said.

In addition to Congressman Cummings, the bill is co-authored by Transportation Committee Ranking Member Rep. James Oberstar (D-Minn.) and Reps. William Lipinski (D-Illin.), Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.), Corrine Brown (D-Fla.) and Marty Meehan (D-Mass.).

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### **Congressman Cummings Raises Concern about MD’s Electronic Voting Systems**

In response to concerns expressed by several Howard County, Baltimore City and Baltimore County constituents, Congressman Cummings sent a request to Maryland Governor Robert Ehrlich, Maryland Secretary of State Karl Aumann and Maryland Attorney General Joseph Curran, requesting information as to what measures have been taken to ensure the accuracy of Maryland’s electronic voting system.

“My concern is with respect to Maryland’s computerized, touch-screen balloting machines, manufactured by Diebold Election Systems Inc,” Congressman Cummings said in his letters to Governor Ehrlich and top state officials.

“While these direct recording electronic systems (DREs) have been known to provide convenience, accessibility, and speed, they do not give voters an opportunity to verify their votes through a paper printout,” he continued.

A number of recent studies point to significant security risks in electronic voting systems, Congressman Cummings noted. These studies question the integrity of electronic voting machines that do not have the capability of producing voter-verified paper ballots. Additionally, several nationally-renowned computer scientists consider a voter-verified paper trail to be a critical safeguard for the

accuracy, integrity and security of computer-assisted elections.

“Without this paper trail in place, voters lack the assurance that their votes are being recorded as intended,” Congressman Cummings said.

He added that the lack of a physical record of the vote would also hinder election officials from being able to launch an effective, accurate recount in closely contested elections. Localities across the nation that use DREs have begun to issue mandates that require all voting systems to produce a voter-verified paper record for use in manual audits.

“The Florida voting debacle of the 2000 election taught us all a very important lesson,” Congressman Cummings said. “The most important task is assuring the sanctity of votes. Ensuring that Maryland’s voting system is as secure as possible and guaranteeing that each voter in our state has an opportunity to verify his or her vote after being permanently recorded must be a top priority.”

### **Congressman Cummings Helps Launch "Summer Fun, Food & Fitness"**

Congressman Cummings joined the American Council for Fitness and Nutrition (ACFN) to unveil a new nutrition education and physical activity initiative called “Summer Fun, Food & Fitness,” designed to empower Baltimore youth to make more informed healthy lifestyle choices. The program emphasizes the importance of regular physical activity and balanced nutrition in achieving and maintaining life long health.

Summer Fun, Food & Fitness is an eight-week summer program developed by ACFN in partnership with the Boys and Girls Club of Central Maryland and the Baltimore International College School of Culinary Arts. The program will feature weekly interactive cooking segments and nutrition tips to help children and families incorporate healthy eating into their daily lives. It will also encourage children to become more physically active by demonstrating that fitness is fun and achievable both in school and at home. The summer curriculum will feature an online component in partnership with [www.kidnetic.com](http://www.kidnetic.com).

*(Continued on Pg. 3)*

## ***Summer Fun, Food & Fitness, From Pg. 2***

"I commend the American Council for Fitness and Nutrition, The Boys and Girls Club of Central Maryland and their partners for bringing this innovative program to Baltimore," Congressman Cummings said. "I have often said that our children are the living messages to a future we will never see. We must teach the importance of exercise and healthy living to our youth so that they can develop habits that will last throughout their lives."

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than half of U.S. adults are overweight or obese. Unhealthy weight trends are even more pronounced among African-Americans, where nearly 80 percent of African-American women are overweight or obese, and nearly 61 percent of African-American men are overweight or obese. Among African-American teens, 46 percent are overweight and 27 percent are obese.

"By addressing nutritional balance and physical activity, we're taking an integrated approach to helping young people help themselves," says Karen Bond, CEO, Boys and Girls Club of Central Maryland. "It's critically important that we work together to help our children make healthy eating and physical activity a lifetime habit," Bond continued.

Congressman Cummings is committed to addressing the issue of childhood obesity. Recently he helped launch a "Healthy Living" program at Booker T. Washington Middle School in Baltimore City to teach children about the importance of nutrition and exercise.

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### **Report Finds Few Benefits of Medicare Discount Card**

On July 22, the Special Investigations Division of the House Government Reform Committee Minority Staff prepared a report for Congressman Cummings that found that the new Medicare Discount Drug Cards do not significantly benefit seniors in the 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional District of Maryland.

The statutory predecessor to Medicare's prescription drug plan set to begin in 2006, the discount drug card program allows seniors to sign up for Medicare-approved cards that give discounts for some of their prescriptions.

Seniors could begin signing up for the card beginning May 3, with the card becoming effective June 1 to December 31, 2005.

For a maximum of \$30, seniors may buy one card from a private company offering the card. The companies include various pharmaceuticals, HMOs, and insurance companies.

But according to the report entitled *Medicare Drug Cards Provide Few Discounts in Maryland's 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional District*:

- **The prices available through the discount drug card are significantly higher than the prices for the same drugs in Canada.** For example, a 30-day supply of the arthritis drug Celebrex costs only \$38.69 in Canada, compared with \$74.14 or more with the Medicare drug cards in Baltimore City, Baltimore County or Howard County.
- **The costs for drugs bought with the Medicare card are significantly higher than prices negotiated by the federal government for the Department of Veterans Affairs and other federal agencies.** While the federal government negotiates with pharmaceutical companies to receive a discount on drugs for veterans, it does not do so for seniors. As a result, medicines that seniors buy through the discount drug card cost significantly more.
- **The discount does not really reduce costs.** The report found that the prices for medicines offered by other private drug companies such as <http://www.drugstore.com> cost the same as the discounts offered by the Medicare drug card.

Congressman Cummings voted against the *Medicare Prescription Drug Act* bill (H.R. 1) in November 2003, since it did not provide a clear and comprehensive plan to reduce drug costs for seniors. Currently, he is working with both his Democratic and Republican colleagues to amend the act to benefit all seniors.

"Seniors have worked hard their entire lives and deserve a retirement that doesn't burden them financially," Congressman Cummings said.

## **Grants to the 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional District:**

Congressman Cummings secured the following federal grants to benefit the residents of Maryland's 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional District. In receiving these grants for the district, Congressman Cummings worked with Senators Paul S. Sarbanes, Barbara A. Mikulski and Congressmen Benjamin L. Cardin and C.A. "Dutch" Ruppersberger.

**\$23 Million Transportation Grant:** As the only Maryland Democrat on the House Transportation Committee, Congressman Cummings facilitated a \$23,020,258 grant for the Maryland Transit Administration to continue the design, construction, right-of-way and support services for the Light Rail Double Track project. The project will help add more tracks to the Light Rail in Baltimore.

**\$2 Million for Housing Grants to Howard County:** Howard County will receive grants through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development totaling \$2,047,781. The grants will fund programs that help low-income individuals buy homes. Specifically, the grants will help provide resources for down payments and closing costs.

**\$994,100 for Substance Abuse Treatment:** The Baltimore City Health Department will receive a grant of \$994,100 to help fund interim methadone treatment. The grant came through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Congressman Cummings was able to secure this grant through his position as the Ranking Member on the House Government Reform Subcommittee Criminal Justice, Drug Policy, and Human Resources.

**\$260,000 to Curb Juvenile Delinquency:** Through the U.S. Department of Justice, the Maryland Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention will receive \$260,000 for its Title V Incentive Grant for Local Delinquency Prevention Program. The programs focuses on preventing youth from entering the juvenile justice system.

**\$175,000 for Seniors:** The Maryland Department of Aging will receive \$175,000 through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to curb abuse in Medicare and Medicaid.

## **Congressman Cummings' District Offices**

**1010 Park Avenue, Suite 105  
Baltimore, MD 21201**  
(410) 685-9199 and (410) 685-9399 fax

**754 Frederick Road  
Catonsville, Maryland 21228**  
(410) 719-8777 and (410) 455-0110 fax

## **Howard County Outreach Centers**

**First Monday of the Month:**  
Glenwood Library, 2350 Route 97  
Cooksville, MD 21723  
**Hours: 4:00PM - 6:00PM or by  
appointment**

**Second Monday of the Month:**  
Howard County Central Library  
10375 Little Patuxent Pkwy.  
Columbia, MD 21044  
**Hours: 4:00PM - 6:00PM or by  
appointment**

**Second Wednesday of the Month:**  
Savage Library, 9525 Durness Lane  
Laurel, MD 20723  
**Hours: 4:00PM - 6:00PM or by  
appointment**

**Third Monday of the Month:**  
Florence Bain Senior Center  
5470 Ruth Keeton Way  
Columbia, MD 21044  
**Hours: 9:00AM - 11 AM or by appointment**

**Fourth Monday of the Month:**  
Miller Branch Library, 9421 Frederick Road